

# American Promise Project

HIS 102  
Fall 2019

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## IMPORTANT DATES

### ❖ **October 25**

Project Proposal due today in my office by 5:00 p.m.

### ❖ **December 2**

Project due today at the beginning of class

Questions? Stop by during my office hours, talk to me before or after class, or email me.

## The Big Idea

In HIS 102 we're using what's called the Big Idea approach to studying the past through the lens of one significant issue. Our big idea is "The American Promise:" the promise of equality, freedom, representation, and opportunity for all, as stated in The Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights. Completing the American Promise Project will help you achieve Student Learning Outcome #3: "Articulate and apply your understanding of the American promise to your own life in the U.S."

## The Un-Essay

*How will studying the American promise this semester impact your future academic work, your career, your personal goals, and your participation in local, community, and national events and politics? What do you believe is most important about the American Promise, including when we've failed to fulfill the promise and when we've moved closer to living up to our highest ideals as a nation?*

You've had a lot of practice this semester communicating your ideas in writing. Now it's time to use another part of your brain. Instead of a standard written essay, you will answer the above questions using what's called an "un-essay." An un-essay can be almost any non-written medium, including but not limited to a video, song, poster, board game, fabric art, or cartoon. It can be creative writing such as a poem or short story. An un-essay assignment that I use in my history of pop culture classes is asking students to imagine they are pitching an idea for a new TV show, video game, fictional or documentary film.

For more information about un-essays and to see examples, visit <https://geekypedagogy.com/sample-assignments>.

## Your Proposal

Your proposal will consist of two parts.

1.) A **project summary** of the work you'll be completing for this project. This should be at least 1 paragraph long and as specific as possible. What format will you be using? What will it look like when you're done? What are the main points you expect to relate in your finished project? Most importantly, **how will this project help you achieve Student Learning Outcome #3?**

2.) Your suggested **project grading measures**, where you will list exactly what, in your view, you need to complete in order to earn full credit for this assignment. Be specific! In what ways will your project demonstrate your successful completion of SLO #3? Clearly explain what would constitute an Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor project. You can create your own grading rubric if you wish. Unless I foresee some significant problem with your suggested grading measures (or if it's obvious you didn't take this part of your proposal seriously), I will use it to assess your completed project and you will use it to grade your project as well.

If I foresee a major problem with your proposed project, I may ask you to revise and resubmit your proposal. If I foresee minor issues, I may ask you to meet with me and discuss strategies for successfully completing your project.

## Your Learning & Self-Assessment

Cognitive science has proven that we learn best when we make connections between what we're learning and our own individual lives. But I can't tell you what the American promise means to you. Only *you* know what unique experiences, beliefs, values, communities, hopes, and dreams shape your understanding of the American promise. In your project, you may be critical of how we've failed to fulfill our promise as a nation or you might want to celebrate how we've moved closer to greater equality—or a little bit of both.

Your final, completed project will include your own assessment of your project. Using the grading criteria you specified in your proposal, what grade do you believe you have earned and why? Be honest with yourself and with me: have you successfully demonstrated your own individual learning and increased understanding of the American promise with your project?

Self-assessment is a powerful way to build your metacognition (thinking about your thinking) skills and helps you recognize your own achievements, strengths, and areas where you can keep improving your academic work.



*Love superheroes? Maybe you'd like to create your own unique version of Captain America for your project.*



*Love to cook? Maybe you could create a recipe that symbolizes how the American promise has shaped your own family or community history.*

**This project might push you out of your comfort zone. Don't panic! You can do this & I am happy to help any way I can.**